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# Integrating Cultural Concepts into Second Language Instruction

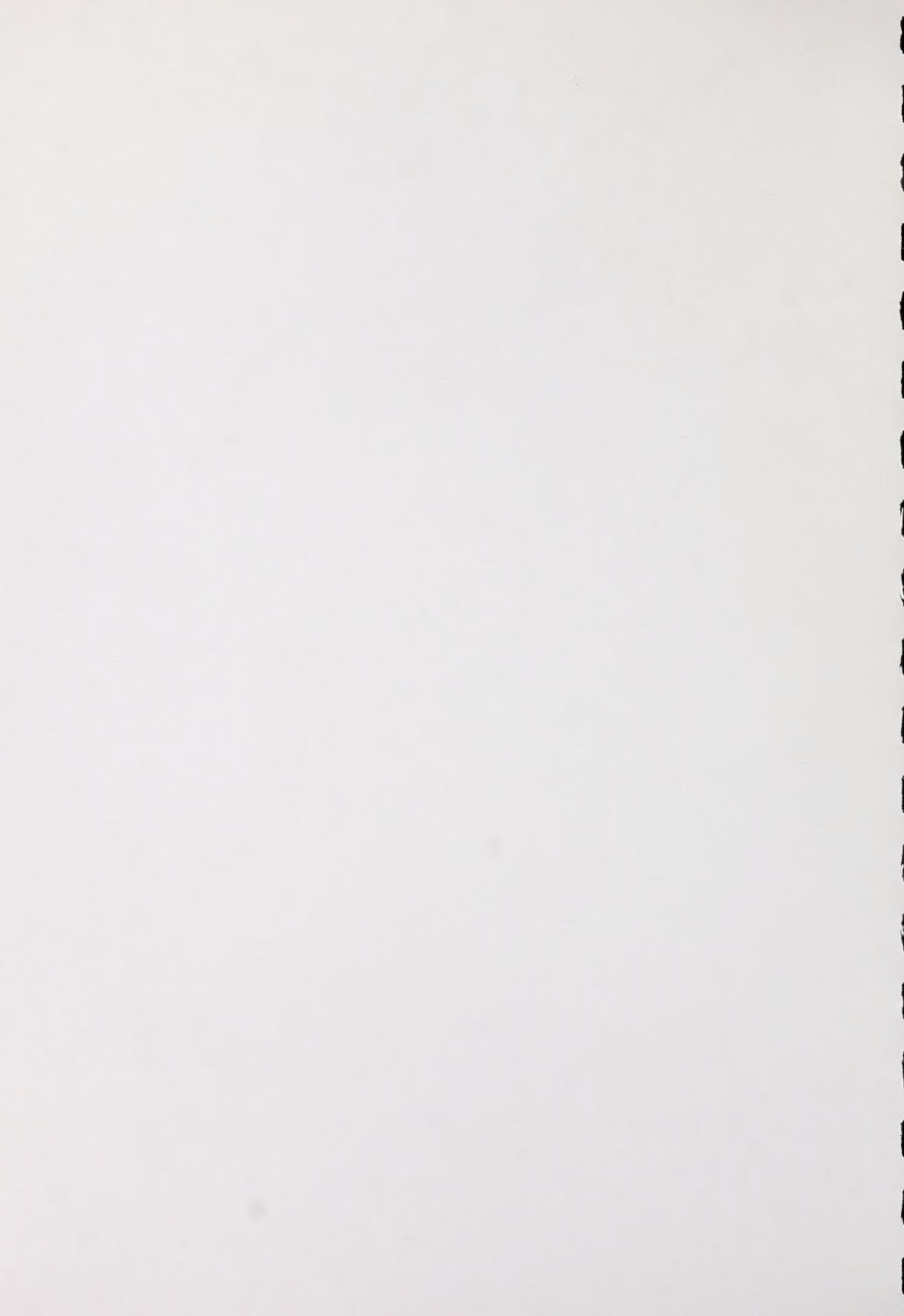
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## Language Services

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# **Integrating Cultural Concepts into Second Language Instruction**

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## TABLE OF CONTENTS

PREFACE .....	vi
INTRODUCTION .....	1
CULTURE AND THE TEACHING OF SECOND LANGUAGES .....	4
Definition of Culture .....	4
Pedagogical Implications .....	6
Goals and Objectives .....	7
STRATEGIES FOR TEACHING ABOUT CULTURE .....	15
The Cognitive Domain .....	15
The Affective Domain .....	27
The Psychomotor Domain .....	31
Sample Unit Plan .....	32
EVALUATION .....	36
Techniques for Measuring and Evaluating Learning .....	36
ISSUES IN THE TEACHING OF CULTURAL CONCEPTS .....	40
1. Cultural patterns of behavior .....	40
a. Customs and traditions of the target culture .....	40
b. Family structure and social relations in the target culture .....	40
c. Building and customs .....	40

## PREFACE

*"I do not want my house to be walled in on all sides and my windows to be stuffed, I want the cultures of all lands to be blown about my home as freely as possible. But I refuse to be blown off my feet by any."*

*- Mahatma Gandhi*

This document defines the role of culture in second language programs and provides practical examples of how to integrate cultural concepts into the teaching of second languages. Although the document is directed primarily to teachers of second languages at all grade levels, it also should be of interest to administrators who supervise second language programs and to those who develop materials for the integrated teaching of cultural concepts.

This document complements and expands on the following Alberta curriculum guides for second languages: the Three, Six and Nine-Year French Programs, the Two and Three-Year German Programs, and the Three and Six-Year Ukrainian Programs, the Three-Year Spanish Program, the Three-Year Italian Program and the Three-Year Latin Program. It provides detailed objectives for the cultural themes identified in the curriculum guides. Suggestions on how to plan lessons based on cultural content and how to develop suitable teaching materials are provided through a case study approach.

The purpose of this document is to strengthen the cultural component of second language programs. Strengthening the cultural component is likely to produce the following results: 1) increased student interest in second language learning, 2) a climate of understanding and tolerance in schools and society, and 3) language instruction programs that are stimulating and motivating.

## **INTRODUCTION**

Learning a second language involves acquiring a mode of expression that is used by members of a different cultural group. Consequently, the teaching of a second language is not simply instruction for communicative competence; it also includes aspects of many other disciplines, such as history, geography, linguistics, politics, education, anthropology, sociology, philosophy, religion, literature, and the fine arts. Students of a second language must be led toward understanding and adapting to the cultural differences that characterize the people who speak the language being studied.

Since culture is an integral part of second language instruction, it should be addressed overtly and systematically. Strategies and activities designed to teach about culture should be appropriate to the students' level of competence, and the results of such activities should be evaluated.

Teachers of second languages might consider including the following cultural themes in their programs:

1. The physical and human geography of countries where the target language is spoken.
2. Social patterns of behavior.
3. Customs and traditions of the target culture.
4. Family structure and social relations in the target culture.
5. Holidays and festivals.

- 6. Food and clothing.**
- 7. Social institutions and services (education and political systems, the economy, transportation, housing).**
- 8. The world of work and leisure in the target culture.**
- 9. Cultural achievements (history, literature, philosophy, religion, music and the fine arts, regional architecture, architecture through the ages).**
- 10. Contributions to modern civilization (inventors, manufacturers, explorers, scientists, statesmen, social legislation, the system of law, the university system).**

These themes can be adapted to suit the needs and interests of particular student populations, and to include overriding cultural themes that may be associated with particular target languages. For example, rural students might be interested in agriculture, and students who are learning the French language might find "food" to be an appropriate theme.

Local school jurisdictions are responsible for developing appropriate cultural materials for second language instruction. Probably the most effective and efficient way of preparing such materials is to organize inservice workshops that encourage teachers to exchange ideas and work together. To ensure active and creative involvement by all participating teachers, there should be careful preparation and

leadership by an experienced teacher or subject-area specialist.

Suitable cultural materials may be available in schools and regional offices; other possible sources include the human and informational resources of provincial colleges and universities. Cultural groups may also be able to provide resource persons.

It is recommended that the cultural activities developed by teachers pass the test of classroom use before they are widely distributed. Also, there should be provision for periodic review and updating of the materials.

## CULTURE AND THE TEACHING OF SECOND LANGUAGES

### DEFINITION OF CULTURE

Culture is defined as a complex of dynamic phenomena which predict, in the most general terms, how people normally interact with others, and how they relate to their environment. Culture is largely acquired behavior: from an early age children learn a wealth of cues, signs, and symbols which govern appropriate behavior in their culture. Because all members of a society share the same symbols to some degree, individual members are often unaware of the profound influence that culture has on everyday life. Not only are language, history, institutions, laws, religion, and folklore part of a culture, but also subtleties such as greetings, leave-takings and behavior patterns pertaining to authority and decorum tend to be culturally determined.

In sum, culture pervades all verbal and non-verbal communication as well as every aspect of interpersonal relationships. Today, it is generally accepted that culture embraces all aspects of human life.

Although culture has a significant effect on all aspects of life, teachers should constantly keep in mind that culture is not an absolute predictor of individual behavior. Classroom instruction should ideally draw the students' attention to the variability within cultures. Students must not be encouraged to view members of another culture in terms of stereotypes.

The following statements briefly outline four ideas that are central to the concept of culture.

1. Certain aspects of culture transcend all boundaries. For example, all groups of people seem to have developed a way of reacting to the unknown or the inexplicable; in other words, all people have a religious or mythological tradition.
2. Culture is not an entity that can be defined precisely and dissected; rather, it is a useful concept for generalizing about common behaviors in a group. If we continue with religion as an example, we note that, although all groups have some type of religious or spiritual philosophy, the specific beliefs held by one group can be very different from those held by another group. Further, these differences may not be easily and precisely definable. The approach used in a scientific laboratory is not appropriate here; usually cultural differences are understood intuitively.
3. Culture can be described in terms of its functions. For example, some people interpret religion as a form of social control, or as a means of ensuring that people behave "properly" or in accordance with the norms of the culture.
4. Culture has a symbolic role. A group of people can assign certain shared meanings to rituals, signs, verbal expressions and body movements. For example, a group of people

who share a religious belief tend to develop rituals and customs that have symbolic meaning for members of the group.

A pragmatic way of looking at the cultural component of a second language program is to compare it to the cultural "briefing" provided to military personnel and corporate managers who have been assigned to a foreign post. The purpose of such training is to enable visitors to understand the cultural differences they will encounter and to deal effectively with the people in the host society. Since the second language curriculum aims at teaching students to communicate successfully with speakers of the target language, the cultural component could be viewed as the minimum of information and behavior modelling that the student requires to achieve the goal of successful communication. If students remain ignorant of the norms governing acts of communication in the language they are learning, and if they do not understand the cultural context, they will not be able to communicate effectively in that language. Therefore, the cultural component is not a "frill", but an essential part of learning the language.

#### PEDAGOGICAL IMPLICATIONS

Second language programs are intended to help learners achieve some degree of bilingual and bicultural competence. Bilingualism is demonstrated by an ability to understand, speak, read and write two languages. Biculturalism is shown through attitudes and actions that reflect an individual's ability to function as an insider in two cultures.

In our pluralistic Canadian society, and in the world as a whole, there is a growing need for empathy, tolerance and acceptance. A second language program that includes cultural objectives that are carefully planned and achieved will help students to develop empathy for the outlook and cultural ways of others. Such a program will also give students a heightened self-understanding and an appreciation of their own culture.

In setting realistic expectations for the bilingual and bicultural growth of students in Alberta schools, educators should not forget that most of our learners are English-speaking, and we are geographically distant from the centres of culture that the students are studying. We have a predominantly monolingual and monocultural environment.

On the positive side, school children are still in the formative stages of their lives, and they will learn easily. Teachers can enhance their students' continuing growth by selecting objectives and strategies appropriate to their stages of development and readiness, and by pointing out commonalities and encouraging students to understand differences.

#### **GOALS AND OBJECTIVES**

The integration of cultural concepts into second language instruction is an extension of the broader goals of education for this province. Although the "Goals of Basic Education for Alberta" statement does not specifically mention second language competencies, such teaching falls within the goals of acquiring basic knowledge and developing skills and

attitudes, with appropriate local, national, and international emphasis in each area of study. Also, teaching cultural concepts falls within the goal of developing the ability to get along with people of varying backgrounds, beliefs, and lifestyles.

The second language program of studies, which further defines the expectations for cultural learning in second language instruction, states that students should be able to:

- demonstrate an awareness, understanding, and appreciation of target language cultural groups;
- recognize differences and similarities between the learners' culture and the target language culture;
- become acquainted with the significance of social conventions in the target language culture;
- appreciate cultural connotations of familiar vocabulary and expressions; and,
- learn about historical experiences of target language groups in Canada.

Successful integration of culture into second language instruction will help to achieve the following objectives:

**1. Fostering  
Appreciation of the  
Target Culture**

Although positive attitudes toward a culture can help the student to learn a language, positive attitudes are not necessarily one of the outcomes of studying a second language. Appreciation of the

target culture must be fostered carefully. Cultural ideas should not be presented simply as a series of contrasts with the learner's own culture. With this approach, students may tend to conclude that members of another culture do or say things that are irrational, immoral and/or illogical in terms of their own cultures and value systems. The reasons for certain ways of doing things must be provided. Also, although students should be encouraged to be tolerant of other cultural practices, they cannot be expected to adopt a position of moral relativism, in which no culturally motivated behaviors (female infanticide or vendetta murders, for example) are to be judged reprehensible.

The biases held by teachers or presented in textbooks can become significant obstacles to the students' appreciation of the target culture. Textbooks may lack cultural content, or they may treat such content haphazardly. However, in such circumstances the language teacher has an opportunity to become a mediator who widens the cultural and linguistic horizons of the learner through careful and positive handling of the textbook content.

## **2. Promoting Awareness of Differences and Similarities**

The native culture and the target culture may differ in their role expectations for men, women, adolescents, and children, and in their attitudes toward social class and place of residence. Each culture may have certain words that evoke special feelings and images, and a special philosophy or "world view". The most obvious cultural differences usually occur in people's social mores and everyday customs.

**3. Deepening  
Understanding of  
One's Own Culture**

Students who learn another language acquire a unique perspective on their own language and culture. If we ask our students why they learn a second language, they will probably answer that they wish to be able to speak it. Yet, after many years, when much detailed knowledge has been forgotten, these students will be unable to speak the language we taught them. Their knowledge will have become more passive: they may understand more than they can say, and read more than they can write. But, what will remain with them throughout their lives will be a knowledge of what it means to take themselves out of the security of their own culture and language. By freeing their minds from the constraints of their own linguistic and cultural environment, they have been able to reflect on it in a more objective way.

**4. Facilitating Second  
Language Learning**

When learning a second language, the student usually learns to appreciate some of the traits of the target culture. There are several social and affective factors that determine the degree of social and psychological integration of the learner into the target language group.

**Social Factors:** If a group is socially, economically or politically dominant, other groups tend to wish to learn its language and culture. For instance, every German who is academically or technically trained is expected to have some competence in English. In such situations, these positive attitudes toward the target language and culture act as powerful motivators for learning English as a second language.

English-speaking Canadians are already members of a dominant culture; consequently, there is often little "natural" incentive to adopt the values and customs of another culture and language. This does not mean that English-speaking students cannot learn second languages, but students and teachers do have to overcome a certain social and psychological resistance to learning a second language.

**Affective Factors:** Language shock and culture shock influence cultural integration, and therefore second language acquisition. Learners of a second language may experience discomfort, insecurity and low self-esteem. The more readily language learners can regress to a childlike state and accept their imperfections, the better they will be as language learners.

Initially, learners of a second language will find that they have a marginal ability to function in the target culture, both linguistically and socially. As a consequence, learners may experience negative feelings toward themselves or toward their native culture, or toward the target language and culture. The teacher needs, therefore, to know not only how to teach a language effectively, but also what reactions are to be expected from the learners. Making learners aware of these psychological defence mechanisms can help them to be more open to the new language and culture.

## 5. Enhancing Motivation

Human beings have an innate propensity to explore, a need to seek the new and unusual, and a drive to search for stimulation. This human need

for stimulation can be satisfied in the second language class. Most students will not find the basic skills for communicating in a second language especially interesting; this skill learning is usually seen as a necessary but dull task. Although the cultural component of the second language curriculum may more readily capture the students' imagination than the development of the basic communication skills, the teacher should not use culture merely as an adjunct, a sugar coating for the bitter pill of learning language skills.

The motivation of a group often has socio-economic and political foundations. The language we learn is frequently determined by established patterns of international relations or by political motives. The teaching of French in Western Canada is both helped and hindered by conflicting political views on Canadian identity. Some languages, such as Native Indian languages in Canada, have been stigmatized by societal values. Teachers of second languages may have to dispel myopic perceptions of the target culture before any meaningful learning can take place. In this context, the cultural concepts become a necessary prerequisite to the effective learning of linguistic skills.

Individual motivation is also a significant variable, which may support or detract from the learner's success. The more meaningful and personally interesting the material, the more likely that it will be mastered and retained. Success in learning creates its own powerful motivation.

## **6. Facilitating Communicative Competence**

The goal of second language teaching is to achieve communicative competence, which includes viewing, listening, speaking, reading and writing skills as well as a knowledge of culture. If the cultural component of language learning is left out, the learner cannot communicate effectively in the target language. An understanding of culture prepares the learners for linguistic encounters with speakers of the target language. Knowing only words and rules will not ensure communicative competence since each word and phrase is embedded in a cultural context that must also be transmitted.

The goal of second language instruction is to prepare learners to function in everyday situations commensurate with their age and interests, and to sensitize them for various roles in contacts with the target culture – as readers of printed materials, as listeners and viewers of broadcasts, and as partners in dialogue with native speakers.

## **7. Enhancing Critical Thinking**

Learning about culture also enhances the learners' ability to think critically. "Critical thinking" is usually defined as the ability to organize data and make it the basis for comparison and evaluation. Critical thinking does not imply automatic criticism; it refers to applying criteria or standards of judgment to new information or to previously acquired knowledge. Critical thinking is especially important in the acquisition of new information. Simply storing new information in long-term memory without recognizing the impact of the new information upon previously acquired knowledge

or values reduces the human mind to the level of a mechanical recording device.

Teachers have excellent opportunities for developing critical thinking skills through cultural concepts. When learners are confronted with different social patterns and values, they are forced to face the new and critically examine the old. Although learners should not be made to feel uncomfortable with the structure of their own society and its value system, they should be encouraged to find reasons for their own cultural conventions and learn to understand why in another culture other models may be more suitable.

## **STRATEGIES FOR TEACHING ABOUT CULTURE\***

This section contains sample activities for learning about cultural themes. The cultural themes have been selected and ordered according to competence-based criteria. Teachers should choose strategies and activities that are appropriate to their students' level of linguistic proficiency (cognitive domain) and their needs and interests (affective domain).

Educational objectives can be classified in three areas: the **cognitive domain** (which deals with recognition and recall, logical thinking, evaluative thinking and creative thinking), the **affective domain** (which is concerned with attitudes, interests, motivation, and the acquisition of appreciations and values), and the **psychomotor domain** (which encompasses observable behavior, such as physical skills and non-verbal actions). Accordingly, teachers can deal with the culture of the target language by using thinking faculties, by dealing with the students' interests and motivation and their value system, and by involving the students in physical activities that demonstrate certain aspects of the other culture.

### **THE COGNITIVE DOMAIN**

Some cognitive activities are less complex than others. For example, it is easier for a learner of a second language to enumerate the objects which can be found hanging on an adolescent's bedroom wall in France than to give reasons for differences in the

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\*For the purposes of this document, strategies are defined as techniques for achieving objectives: how teachers teach and how students learn, and what is to be taught and practised.

objects that are usually found in Canadian and French homes. Listing, enumerating, labelling and describing are easier tasks than comparing, grouping, inferring, and explaining. Logical thinking, evaluative thinking or creative thinking in the target language will be difficult for a student who has limited proficiency in the target language.

If the teacher does not select learning activities that are suitable to the linguistic level at which the students are operating, students will be frustrated by the difficulty of the learning task or bored by excessively simple assignments. If a cultural concept is considered essential but it exceeds the students' linguistic proficiency, a case can be made for the use of the mother tongue in dealing with that particular concept.

Cultural themes that are often studied in second language classes include themes that relate to:

1. the individual,
2. interaction with family and friends,
3. sociocultural institutions, and
4. sociocultural values and extrasocietal elements such as technology.

Initially, the student would likely profit most from learning about an individual who has another culture, because concepts pertaining to an individual are easy to relate to. The student could then learn about the individual's interactions with his or her family or friends, and finally about the individual's

formal social relationships and interactions with sociocultural institutions.

Themes which focus on individual characteristics, hobbies, or interests are also most suitable for students who have limited linguistic proficiency, while students at advanced levels will be capable of understanding themes involving a higher degree of sociocultural abstraction. However, beginning students can also do evaluative and creative thinking if the conceptual and linguistic foundations have been laid carefully.

Table 1 classifies various cultural themes according to their cognitive complexity. Although the table classifies different themes and processes as discrete units, a student does not actually learn in this way. Students are often engaged in many different combinations of cognitive activities at the same time. For example, a self-contained unit involving a culture capsule or a minidrama could involve the students in observing, comparing, evaluating, and creative thinking.

**Table 1: Matrix of Cognitive Operations and Cultural Themes**

		CULTURAL THEMES			
		IMMEDIATE ← → DISTANT			
		Individual	Informal interactions with family and friends	Socio-cultural institutions	Sociocultural values and extrasocietal elements
COGNITIVE OPERATIONS	COMPLEX	Creative Thinking <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• expanding</li> <li>• extrapolating</li> <li>• synthesizing</li> </ul>			
	EVALUATIVE	Evaluative Thinking <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• opining</li> <li>• criticizing</li> <li>• justifying</li> </ul>			
	LOGICAL	Logical Thinking <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• comparing</li> <li>• grouping</li> <li>• generalizing</li> <li>• explaining</li> </ul>			
	SIMPLE	Memory <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• identifying</li> <li>• labelling</li> <li>• enumerating</li> <li>• describing</li> <li>• reporting</li> </ul>			

## **1. Identifying, Labelling, Enumerating, Describing and Reporting**

At the beginning level of cognitive operations, the student engages in activities of the following types:

- identifying objects or situations (e.g., describing the contents of a picture, or narrating a story represented by a series of drawings or a film);
- recalling previously learned items of vocabulary or structure (e.g., through directed activities or free association);
- combining given elements into meaningful utterances (e.g., synthetic exercises, sentence switchboards); or,
- summarizing the contents of a passage by simplifying and shortening the original to produce a closely defined outline.

Activities at the beginning level of cognitive operations might focus on an individual in the target culture: his or her personal qualities and characteristics; personal information, such as name, address, age, and physical appearance; clothing preferences; hobbies; eating habits; or, responsibilities at work or school.

The activities might also involve description of an individual's patterns of interaction with family or friends. For example, in discussing the quality of interpersonal relationships students could consider how speakers of the target language communicate with their peers or their elders; how they celebrate their birthdays or their namedays; their choice of friends; their closeness to family members; and, how

they make new friends. Students could also obtain information about members of the individual's immediate or extended family and about friends.

Thirdly, students could study **sociocultural institutions**, such as the school system, government, the economic system, and the formal interactions of the individual with representatives of these institutions. Interactions might include social conventions at the formal level, getting along with people in the work place, small talk at a party, making a request at the post office, concluding a business deal, dining rituals at various levels of formality, the leisure industry, looking for a job or an apartment, or giving directions to a stranger. Students should learn words and structures that are appropriate to the particular situation.

For some students sociocultural values and extrasocietal elements may not be of particular interest. However, students could learn, for example, about a housewife's everyday responsibilities, the expectations that she holds for her role and the expectations that others have of her. Although cultural hallmarks of a group of people, such as "love of family life" or "personal honesty and integrity" might be mentioned, care should be taken to avoid making gross generalizations.

At this level, even though more complex topics may be addressed, students' activities should be limited to listing and enumerating information.

## **2. Logical or Convergent Thinking**

At the second level of cognitive operations, the student engages in activities of the following types:

- comparing and contrasting features and identifying similarities and differences;
- grouping observed characteristics into categories and finding generic names for the features;
- formulating generalizations, principles or rules from groups of events;
- offering explanations for phenomena, based on the available information;
- applying previously derived rules to new information or situations; or,
- establishing concepts that encompass certain sets of principles.

Students need to learn certain types of phrases in the target language before they can analyze events and situations and express commonality or distinctiveness of features. They must be able to express relationships of time, space and causality in the second language. If possible, students should also learn alternatives for verbal expressions in order to avoid repetitious vocabulary and syntactic structure.

If students are discussing themes related to personal characteristics at this second cognitive level, they should be able to extract information from several texts and group their observations into patterns. For example, they could classify individuals according to their educational background or social class membership. Another activity on this theme might be to gather statistical information

about some aspect of the learner's culture and of the target language culture, and to use that information to establish apparent cultural differences and similarities.

On the theme of informal interactions with family or friends, the students may already have described how people of various backgrounds greet each other verbally and non-verbally. Now, at this level, the students can classify these characteristic greetings and try to arrive at some generalizations about them, including the reasons for certain conventions.

Students might group, compare and label the notable features of institutions or of formal interactions. For example, having read the diary of a student who has spent some time in the target culture, the students may make judgments/observations about how long it takes for an outsider to be invited into a home, or to become accepted as a member of the group, and what the signs are by which one can recognize such acceptance. Similarly, students could collect and classify linguistic or symbolic data that seem to represent an underlying societal value or standard and attempt to label it as such.

### **3. Evaluative Thinking**

In communication, students use evaluative thinking when they choose appropriate phrases in the target language. They learn how to express their opinions, and how to praise, affirm, deny, criticize, justify, agree, contradict, express reservation, insist, correct themselves or someone else, and express indifference, preference or rejection.

As a rule, evaluative thinking strategies are learned only after students have done other types of exercises involving listing, grouping and labelling. Evaluative thinking occurs when a student:

- 1) renders a personal opinion using a subjective standard;
- 2) evaluates a phenomenon on the basis of a specified external criterion and comes to a conclusion about its truth, applicability or quality; or,
- 3) justifies an action, thought or wish.

Evaluative activities might, for example, include a discussion of an individual's choice of clothing in terms of such criteria as affordability, prestige value, or political symbolism. Informal interactions between an individual and his or her family or friends might be addressed through a discussion of the advantages of the familiar address used in French and German societies.

Formal relationships represent a puzzle to many learners of another language. For example, when invited to "come back soon", should one take up the invitation at some future date? At what point is it appropriate to switch from formal to familiar address, and who initiates the change? Why is it preferable to have (or not have) a means of expressing social distance via language? In discussing formal interaction patterns, the teacher must be aware of the potential for over-generalization. It is useful, therefore, to restrict such discussion to specific situations and persons.

#### **4. Creative Thinking**

Originality of thought is a relative matter. The cognitive operations involved in creative learning activities may give new meanings to known concepts,

expand concepts beyond the given data, achieve closure with an incomplete set of data, synthesize known data to gain new insights, or produce original utterances solely upon individual initiative.

Standard teaching techniques such as brainstorming, simulation, games, role-playing, minidramas and skits require creative thinking. Creative thinking should be considered a culminating activity for cultural concept formation because it draws data from various sources and requires the student to identify with the target culture.

Following are suggestions for activities involving creative thinking:

1. Personal characteristics of an individual:  
"Write a conclusion to an adventure story or an account of what you would have done if you had been crowned King of Spain."
2. Personal relationships: "Imagine you are a parent. Criticize your child's behavior and give reasons for cutting back on his/her allowance."
3. Formal relationships: "Develop a skit (including appropriate dress, gestures and choice of words and registers) that shows your comprehension and appreciation of the target language culture."
4. Societal values: "Create a vignette (short sketch) that shows your understanding of the social values of the target language culture."

**Table 2 provides sample classroom activities involving the various types of cognitive operations and different themes.**

**Table 2: Sample Activities Classified According to Cognitive Operations and Cultural Themes**

CULTURAL THEMES			
Individual	Informal interactions with family and friends	Sociocultural institutions	Sociocultural values and extrasocietal elements
<b>Creative Thinking</b> (e.g., expanding, extrapolating, synthesizing)	In a role reversal, imagine that you are your grandfather. How would you bring up your children?	Imagine you are the host (hostess) of a dinner party. You are surprised by your European guests' early arrival at the doorstep.	Act out a skit that is based on sociocultural differences between your culture and the target language culture.
	Discuss the pros and cons of living in a residence. Where do most European university students live? Where would you want to live?	Having read the story of a self-made millionaire, criticize/defend his decision to work until late at night.	In a story (about rural France), justify your view that character X is a "better person" than character Y.
<b>Evaluative Thinking</b> (e.g., expressing opinion, criticizing, justifying)	Compare the way in which close friends of the same sex greet each other in France and in Canada.	Explain why high school graduates in Switzerland appear to be so much more knowledgeable than most of their Canadian counterparts.	Compare the timetables of a traditional Gymnasium and a comprehensive school in Germany.
	Make a list of your pen pal's hobbies and compare them with your own.	Explain why in	In a paragraph about a person's house, underline all adjectives that refer to colour, size, and price.
<b>Logical Thinking</b> (e.g., comparing, grouping, generalizing, explaining)	Describe what your family would do on a typical weekend.	Describe which services you may obtain at a German post office.	
<b>Memory</b> (e.g., identifying, labelling, enumerating, describing, reporting)	Make a list of words that relate to the concept "summer".		

**Note:** These are examples for cognitive strategies on four different levels and for four different themes. Although nationalities are mentioned in some cases, the strategies are applicable to all second languages.

## THE AFFECTIVE DOMAIN

Many students will have no prior knowledge of the target language culture and therefore will have no emotional bond with it; others may "like", "love", "appreciate", "value", "respect", "reject", or "hate" some aspect of the culture. The former group may be said to have "value-neutral" attitudes toward the other culture, while the latter brings "value-positive" or "value-negative" attitudes into the classroom.

It is by no means necessary for students to learn to "love" and emulate all aspects of the target language culture; but they should be able to, firstly, acquire a cognitive understanding and knowledge of the facts and, secondly, acquire an attitude of respect or appreciation for any differences which might occur between the native language and target language cultures. It would be pedagogically and professionally wrong to try to convince or compel students to believe that the target language culture is superior to their own culture. Such an intention would inevitably lead either to a docile, superficial, and therefore dishonest acceptance of the virtues of the other culture, or to an attitude of hostile resistance toward or even outright rejection, or to a feeling of inferiority vis-a-vis the foreign culture.

Teachers should help students to reduce negative feelings and perceptions about the other culture by offering factually correct, unstereotypical information. Students can then make up their own minds as to whether or not they want to change or modify their attitudes.

If teachers can develop the students' interest in aspects of the other culture and an attitude of

respect for its differences from the students' own culture, the students will be motivated to learn more about the culture and develop a more detailed affective, valuing relationship with it. As well, new cognitive insights and emotional experiences will increase interest in the subject and provide for increased motivation to learn more about it. The establishment of an affective relationship between students and the target language culture, therefore, represents an essential part of cultural learning and teaching.

The development of an affective relationship with a culture tends to occur in four stages. These stages may be described as: **receptivity, responsiveness, appreciation, and clarification and integration of values.**

## **1. Receptivity**

To be able to establish an affective relationship with the target language culture, students must first learn to "receive" cultural information: being willing to receive (opening their minds to new information), remaining open without prejudging, and, on a somewhat higher level, directing their attention to aspects of the other culture (consciously listening or reading for cultural items).

"Receptivity" might be developed through activities such as the following:

- viewing slides, films, objects, pictures, art objects, newspapers, magazines
- hearing songs, music, accents, advertisements
- touching coins or puppets

- tasting food or drink
- smelling fragrances, perfumes or food
- observing or experiencing customs and traditions, dances and other items of folklore.

## **2. Responsiveness**

At the next stage, students may either accept a cultural idea or respond with a feeling of satisfaction, pleasure, or enjoyment. At this affective level, the learners are exhibiting a certain degree of interest in the other culture, but "responding" does not yet imply that the stimulus has any particular value to them.

"Responsiveness" might be encouraged through activities such as the following:

- trying to understand what another person is saying
- listening attentively to strange-sounding, unfamiliar types of music
- describing, enumerating, relating events
- recalling information
- inquiring from another person about an item of culture
- identifying accents, objects, buildings, customs
- comparing, relating and categorizing characteristics
- participating in cultural activities, miming.

## **3. Appreciation**

Speakers of a language attach certain values to items of cultural information. At first, students of

the language will recognize these values and understand the reasons for them. At a later stage, the students may begin to attach their own value to the cultural item. This stage of "appreciation" involves affective activity. This "valuing" process may be based on the value system of the target language, or on the students' own value system.

"Appreciation" might occur in activities such as the following:

- identifying advantages and disadvantages of certain cultural institutions; identifying costs and benefits accruing
- identifying quantitative and qualitative aspects of an item of cultural information
- expressing likes or dislikes for customs, objects, habits, pictures, music
- using private and/or public criteria, giving opinions about the value or usefulness of a certain aspect of the target language culture
- defending, rationalizing or justifying an item of one's own culture or of the target language culture.

#### **4. Clarification and Integration of Values**

At this level, students clarify their perceptions of the values of their own culture, compare those with their perceptions of the values of the other culture, and integrate the two into a balanced system. The result will be an internally consistent system of values, which will be different for each student. Students who have reached this stage of development will be able to choose certain values exhibited by the other culture and make them their

own, and reject other values while maintaining respect for them and what they represent.. Through this process of integration of values, the student may become part of the other culture and think, act, and behave like its members.

"Clarification and integration of values" might be encouraged through activities such as the following:

- trying to sound (look) like a native speaker
- imitating, impersonating
- role-playing
- puppet-playing
- writing or telling stories dealing with life in the target culture
- adopting certain habits of eating, drinking, celebrating for oneself; adopting social customs respected by the other culture
- independently seeking out contacts with the foreign culture (speakers, films, records, newspapers, and magazines)
- traveling to areas where the other culture is dominant.

#### **THE PSYCHOMOTOR DOMAIN**

The psychomotor domain plays a part in the integration of language and culture. In learning a language, students become aware of typical facial expressions, gestures, acceptable personal distances, handshakes, and other instances of non-verbal behavior. Learning the language involves learning the meaning and significance of such behavior and the correct use of these behaviors in different social

circumstances. To learn psychomotor skills that are related to the target language, students might participate in activities such as the following:

- drawing aspects of situations typical of the foreign culture
- using appropriate forms of body language and other non-verbal behavior (introductions, greeting customs, eating customs, driving customs, appropriate dress customs, respect for private space, non-verbally extending and responding to invitations).

#### **SAMPLE UNIT PLAN**

The following "Sample Unit Plan" provides suggestions about how a second language teacher might plan instruction that integrates linguistic and cultural concepts. Instructional considerations include the age and grade level of the learners, their linguistic proficiency and the amount of time available for the unit of instruction. Cultural considerations include relevant characteristics of the topic under study: the geographical location, socioeconomic status, and age of the people being studied as well as other significant facts.

The "Sample Unit Plan for German 10" illustrates an application of the Sample Unit Plan. Not every strategy identified in this unit is applicable to all types of materials; the example illustrates one possible way of analyzing cultural materials and links them to linguistic objectives.

## Sample Unit Plan

MAJOR CULTURAL THEME:		RESOURCE(S): (Textbook, Film, Song, Field Trip, etc.)	
INSTRUCTIONAL CRITERIA		CULTURAL CRITERIA	
Approximate number of unit lessons: Grade level: Level of language proficiency:		In this section identify cultural and social factors that influence behavior so as to avoid over-generalizing about a group of people.	
CULTURAL CONTENT		LINGUISTIC CONTENT	STRATEGIES AND ACTIVITIES
State the major cultural theme and specify the sub-themes. Grade level: Level of language proficiency:		<p>a. Identify the language functions.*</p> <p>b. Identify theme-related vocabulary.</p> <p>c. Identify grammatical structures that will be used frequently.</p>	<p>This section outlines a series of steps or activities that the teacher plans to follow. Teachers are encouraged to employ a broad range of cognitive operations ranging from the simple (e.g., describing, enumerating) to the complex (e.g., comparing, evaluating).</p> <p>Specify: class organization (e.g., small or large group discussion approach (e.g., problem solving) activities (e.g., role-play, field trips)</p>
			EVALUATION
		Evaluation activities (oral tests, paper-and-pencil tests, observations of student behavior, etc.).	

\*See specification of linguistic content in curriculum guide for description of language functions.

**Explanatory Notes:** This plan incorporates aspects of culture as outlined in the preceding sections and integrates them with the linguistic component. There is no set sequence for presenting the cognitive strategies and activities.

## Sample Unit Plan for German 10

<b>MAJOR CULTURAL THEME:</b> School and Family Life		<b>RESOURCE(S):</b> Vorwärts International K1, p. 77	
INSTRUCTIONAL CRITERIA Approximate number of unit lessons: 2 Grade level: 10 Level of language proficiency: beginners	CULTURAL CRITERIA Area: Northern Germany, suburb of Hamburg Socioeconomic group: Middle class, professional or self-employed family Age group: 12-13 Other: Joachim Hippel, a talented and motivated student from a stimulating home environment		
<b>CULTURAL CONTENT</b>	<b>LINGUISTIC CONTENT</b>	<b>STRATEGIES AND ACTIVITIES</b>	
<p><b>THE FAMILY</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Location</li> <li>Home ownership in the Federal Republic of Germany</li> <li>Number of children in the family</li> <li>Family support for Joachim's interests and talents</li> </ul> <p><b>THE SCHOOL</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The German Gymnasium: subjects offered, length of periods, school day, students' afternoon activities</li> </ul>	<p>a. LANGUAGE FUNCTIONS</p> <p>Students ask for and provide specific information, express likes and dislikes, state preferences.</p> <p>b. VOCABULARY RELATING TO</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>school subjects</li> <li>family life</li> <li>hobbies</li> </ol> <p>c. STRUCTURE</p> <p>The verb "haben" and the modal auxiliaries "wollen" and "können" in the present tense. The prepositions "von", "aus", "mit", "seit", "an", "in", "über".</p>	<p>1. PRELIMINARY ORIENTATION</p> <p>Students look at the illustrations and describe them in their own words. The teacher asks questions to guide them.</p> <p>2. INTRODUCTION</p> <p>The teacher reads the entire text. Students read alone. During a second reading, students do not look at the text.</p> <p>3. EXPLANATION of unfamiliar grammatical structures and vocabulary through collaboration.</p> <p>4. WORKING WITH CULTURAL CONTENT</p> <p>a. identifying, describing, enumerating</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- enumerate subjects offered at a German Gymnasium</li> <li>- identify Joachim's hobbies</li> </ul> <p>b. comparing, generalizing, explaining</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- compare subjects taught in Germany and Canada</li> <li>- compare a typical school in Germany and Canada</li> <li>- compare after-school activities in Germany and Canada</li> </ul> <p>c. expressing opinions, justifying</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- evaluate the two school systems and state preferences</li> <li>- give opinions about after-school activities in either country</li> </ul> <p>d. expanding, extrapolating</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- stage a debate between German and Canadian students on the advantages of either school</li> <li>- stage a debate on the value of after-school activities in either country</li> </ul>	
		<b>EVALUATION</b>	
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Students list subjects in a German Gymnasium and in a Canadian high school or students' hobbies in Germany and in Canada.</li> <li>Students compare a Gymnasium and a Canadian high school or school life in Germany and in Canada.</li> </ol>			

**Explanatory Notes:** German 10 students usually would not use the target language when higher level cognitive operations are required by an activity. Class organization: small or large group discussion.

## Unit Plan (Blank)

MAJOR CULTURAL THEME:	RESOURCE(S):	CULTURAL CRITERIA	STRATEGIES AND ACTIVITIES	EVALUATION
INSTRUCTIONAL CRITERIA Approximate number of unit lessons: Grade level: Level of language proficiency:	Area: Socioeconomic group: Age group: Other:			
CULTURAL CONTENT	LINGUISTIC CONTENT			

## EVALUATION

The term "evaluation" is more comprehensive and inclusive than "testing" or "measurement". Measurement (testing) is limited to quantitative descriptions of students' work, such as grades that express results in numbers or letter grades. Evaluation involves quantitative and/or qualitative descriptions of students' achievements, and value judgments concerning the desirability of the results, whereas testing and measurement do not.

To evaluate cultural learning, teachers must evaluate the intellectual, emotional, and physical development of their students. Evaluation of cultural learning must be related carefully to the specific skills and attitudes the student has been expected to acquire as a consequence of instruction and the kinds of learning experiences the student has had.

It is important to recognize that some educational objectives are readily measurable (i.e., they can be included as items in paper-and-pencil or other tests) while other objectives that are important and meaningful cannot be assessed by means of objective measurement techniques.

### **Techniques for Measuring and Evaluating Cultural Learning**

Student cognitive development at the knowledge and comprehension levels can be readily tested through paper-and-pencil tests, but teachers should recognize the limitations of such tests and take special care to fit these tests into an overall evaluation strategy.

The following are examples of paper-and-pencil test items in which the students' knowledge of the target culture is being evaluated:

- List the countries where Spanish is spoken (acceptable list will include at least five countries).
- Recall three French place-names in Alberta.
- What are the names of five Alberta communities in which Ukrainians form a significant proportion of the local population?
- Where (in what country) is the world's second largest French-speaking city located?

The following are examples of paper-and-pencil test items in which student understanding of the target culture is being evaluated:

- Explain the origins of the names of the following Alberta towns: Lacombe, Bonnyville, Leduc.
- Compare your Italian pen pal's hobbies with your own.
- Compare the way in which close friends of the same sex greet each other in Canada and in Spain.
- Given a number of photos of early Ukrainian settlers' homes, describe a typical early Ukrainian settler's kitchen (living room, etc.).
- Explain why Italian cars are generally so much smaller than Canadian cars.
- Explain probable reasons why French Albertans want their children to have an

opportunity to obtain their schooling in the French language.

Several of the above test items could also be used in other ways, such as an oral interview (with the teacher or on tape), or open-ended essay exercises that are assigned outside the context of formal testing.

Paper-and-pencil tests can also be used to measure higher-order cognitive and affective cultural objectives, provided that they do not reinforce false stereotypes and permit simplistic or ambiguous responses. The following are examples of some test items that measure higher-order cognitive and affective cultural objectives:

- Demonstrate how you would greet the parents of a French friend.
- Given a French-language newspaper, find a specific job advertised in the want ads.
- Tell briefly why each of the following persons or things is important: 1) Mireille Mathieu, 2) Le Parti Acadien, 3) Le tricolore avec étoile, 4) Le 15 août.
- What reasons can you cite for young people in the Soviet Union being willing to pay exorbitant prices and go to great lengths to procure American-made blue jeans?
- Having read a number of English and Italian passages about family holidays, what do you think an ideal Italian family holiday would be like?

- You have studied several arguments in support of the thesis, "Educated people must be bilingual." Explain why, in your opinion, the arguments are valid or invalid.

To evaluate the achievement of higher-order cognitive and affective objectives, teachers must use a considerable amount of subjective judgment. Various evaluation techniques that are not "tests" in the strictest sense are useful for this purpose. The second language teacher can evaluate students' interest, participation, and values through informal observation, and through interviews, surveys, questionnaires, peer appraisal, self-reports, inventories, and role-playing exercises. (Data obtained through these methods should generally be used primarily for diagnostic purposes.)

## ISSUES IN THE TEACHING OF CULTURAL CONCEPTS

**Should Culture be Integrated into Language Teaching as a Means to an End or as an End in Itself?**

Culture has often been perceived as an entertaining and motivating adjunct to the serious challenge of learning a second language. Today we recognize that the language cannot be divorced from its cultural context; indeed, culture is a necessary dimension of bilingualism and biculturalism. In this context, the cultural concepts serve as a means to an end.

However, cultural concepts are also an end in themselves because they help the learner to grow in understanding and tolerance of others. Only a few students actually achieve bilingualism; the majority of second-language students derive the greatest long-term benefits in the area of cultural understanding.

**Should Culture be Discussed in English or in the Target Language?**

Given the inseparable nature of culture and language, it is desirable to use the target language as much as possible. Indeed, some aspects of culture can only be transmitted through the target language. For instance, the familiar and polite form of address in French and German and other social conventions are often not understandable outside the context of the language itself. However, a short explanation in English is sometimes the most efficient approach to clarifying a cultural convention. Cultural concepts should generally be taught and practised in the target language, but teachers should feel free to use English when the target language presents an obstacle to successful learning.

**Selection and Sequencing of Cultural Activities**

Cultural activities should be selected to suit the linguistic competence of the students. Teachers can select topics associated with small "c" culture,

and items from capital "C" Culture will follow later. Beginners in a second language can become acquainted with the linguistic and cultural conventions of greetings, introductions, food, eating, shopping, traveling, leisure activities, telephoning, and dating. More advanced students can learn about family structure, the role of education in society, the role of government, the impact of geography, climate and natural resources on the economic and cultural development of the country, and the contributions of the target culture to human civilization.

The more advanced and abstract cultural themes can be taught only selectively in a three-year (or even in a six-year) second language program. Teachers are advised to select themes judiciously. In certain instances it is more desirable to treat a few cultural aspects in depth instead of attempting to cover every possible aspect. Teachers should consider students' interest, their own areas of greatest competence, and the availability of suitable and up-to-date teaching materials.

#### **Authenticity, Availability, Currentness and Source of Data**

It is very important to present accurate and current information about a culture, yet it can be difficult to keep up to date. Many teachers have few opportunities to immerse themselves in the target culture, and, even if they have once visited a country where the language is spoken, in today's world, cultures are changing very rapidly. Care should be taken to avoid static cultural models. Students should be made aware of the many sub-cultures and learn about the way people live today as well as how they lived in the past. Students should be introduced to

the way people live in the urban centres and in the country, and to the lifestyles of people of different ages, ethnic backgrounds, and socioeconomic status.

Much distortion can be avoided by relying as much as possible on authentic cultural sources. Government agencies provide excellent current materials on their respective countries. University, college and public libraries can provide books, maps and journals covering every aspect of life in various cultures.

**Note:** Some old textbooks may present a dated perception of the target culture and reflect lifestyles which have now changed.

#### **Avoiding Teacher Bias**

Teachers of second languages must take care to avoid bias, as they may have a tendency to idealize the target culture or to present it in a negative way. Teachers should avoid suggesting that one culture is necessarily better than another.

#### **Avoiding Generalizations**

Generalization is a useful mental shortcut for storing information in human memory. Generalizations hold some validity for at least part of a large sample, but they are seldom applicable to an individual sample. For instance, the statement "All Irishmen are red-haired" is invalid but "Many Irishmen are red-haired" could be a valid statement. It is very important to avoid generalizations if at all possible. When introducing characteristics of the target culture, teachers shoud try to avoid using the word "all" or any of its synonyms. Almost every country in the world has immense cultural diversity, and blanket generalizations do not apply.

The "Sample Unit Plan" (p. 33) is intended to help teachers avoid generalizations. When one situation, one person, or one family is described, it becomes apparent that cultural characteristics are likely to differ for other individuals, or in other parts of the country, or in different socioeconomic settings and under different circumstances.

**Emphasizing  
Cultural Differences  
Versus Emphasizing  
Commonalities**

Cultural studies should foster understanding and tolerance toward those who are different. This aim is best achieved when cultural diversity is recognized, but in the context of the common humanity of all people. Lessons in culture should avoid both positive and negative stereotypes. Students should learn to perceive the world community as a human family. Through the study of other cultures they can reduce their ethnocentrism and provincialism.





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